



A briefe note of the benefits that growe to this Realme, by the obseruation of Fish-daies: with a reason and cause wherefore the lawe in that behalfe made, is ordained. Very necessary to be placed in the houses of all men, specially common Victualers.



Here heretofore by the Queenes most excellent Maiestie, of her clemencie and care conceiued, for diuers priuate benefits that might growe to her louing subiects, specially for the better maintenance of the Hauie of this lande, hath with the assent of the whole State of her Realme, caused to be made & published sundry statute Lawes and proclamations, for the expence of Fish and obseruation of Fish-daies, with great penalties to be laid on the offenders: That by the certaine obseruation thereof, Fisher-men (the chiefeest Hource for Mariners) might the more be increased and maintained. The common sort of people, containing this obseruation, to auoide the ceremony in time past therin vsed, and not certainly knowing the benefites thereby growing to the Realme, nor remembryng the penalties by the saide lawes appointed, do not onely fall into the danger of the saide lawes, but by the same hath caused a great decay to fishing, whereby groweth in any other great detriments to the common-wealth of this Realme. For the better instruction therfore of such persons, as for the benefit of their Countrey will be perswaded: In this briefe Table is set downe the punishment appointed for the offenders, the discommodities that happen to the Realme by the said contempt, and the great benefit that might grow to the people by obseruation hereof, with the opinion that ought to be conceiued in the eating of fish, at the daies and times prescribed, being briefly set downe as hereafter followeth.

THE BRANCHES OF THE STATUTE.

In the first peere of her Maiesties most gracious raigne, it was ordained that it should not be lawfull for any person within this Realme, to eat any flesh vpon any daies then vsually obserued as fish-daies, vpon paine to forfeit three pounds for euery time he offendeth, or suffer three months imprisonment without baile or mainprize.

And euery person within whose house any such offence shalbe done, being priuie and knowing thereof, and not effectually punishing or disclosing the same to some publique officer having authority to puni he the same, to forfeit for euery such offence fiftie shillings, the said penaltie being great, and many of poore estate fauored by reason thereof, but the offence thought necessary not to be left unpunished, the Queenes Maiestie of hir great clemencie in the Parliament holden this 34. yeere of hir most gracious raigne, hath caused the forfeiture for the eater to be but twentie shillings, and for him in whose house it is eaten, but 13. shillings foure-pence, which being executed, will proue very damagedeable to the offenders.

In the twentie seueneth yeere of her highnesse raigne, it was further ordained and remaineth still in force, that no Inholder, Clinker, Alehouse-keeper, Common-victualer, Common-cooke, or Common-Table-keeper, shall utter or put to sale, vpon any Friday, Saturday, or other daies appointed to be Fish-daies, or any day in time of Lent, any kinde of flesh vi-tuall, vpon paine of forfeiture of five pounds, and shall suffer ten daies imprisonment without baile mainprize, or remouue, for euery time so offending.

THE CAUSE AND REASON.

First for as much as our Countrey is (for the most part) compassed with the Seas, and the greatest force for defence thereof, vnder God, is the Queenes Maiesties Hauie of ships: for maintenance and increase of the said Hauie, this lawe of abstinence hath bene most carefully ordained, that by the certaine expence of Fish fishing and Fisher-men might be the more increased and the better maintained, for that the said trade is the chiefeest Hource, not onely for the bringing up of youth meete for shipping, but great numbers of ships therein are vsed, furnished with sufficient Mariners, men at all times in readines for hir Maiesties seruice in those affaires.

The second cause, for that many Townes and Villages vpon the Sea coasts, are of late yeeres wonderfully decayed, and some wonderfully depopulated, which in times past were replenished, not onely with Fisher-men, and great store of shipping, but sundry other Artificers: as Shipwrightes, Smithes, Ropemakers, Net-makers, Saile-makers, Vellners, Dyers, Carriers and Utters of Fish, maintained chiefly by fishing. That they hereby againe might be renewed, the want whereof, is, and hath bene cause of great numbers of idle persons, with whom the Realme is greatly damaged: and this happeneth by reason of the vncertainty of the sale of Fish, and the contempt which in eating of fish is conceiued.

Furthermore, it is to be considered, that the trade for grasing of cattell, though the vnlawfull expence of flesh, is so much increased, that many Farme houses and villages, wherein were maintained great numbers of people, and by them the markets plentifully serued with Corne and other victuals, is now utterly decayed & put down, for the feeding or grasing of Beeces and Buttons onely, by meanes whereof, the people which in such places were maintained, are not onely made vagrant, but also, Calues, Hogs, Pigs, Geese, Hennes, Chickens, Capons, Eggs, Butter, Cheese, and such like things, doth become exceeding scarce and deare by want of their increase in those places, so that the Markets are not now cannot be serued as in times past it hath bene.

Many other things for confirmation hereof might be spoken, as the great number of ships decayed, which hath bene maintained by fishing, the wealth and commoditie that fishing bringeth to this Realme, the cause that certaine daies and times for expence of Fish, must of necessitie be obserued, growne by reason the prouision of fish for the peoples diet, must be certainly prouided, whereof the gentle Reader shall be more at large instructed in a litle booke published to that effect, with sundry other arguments which for breuitie is omitted, in hope the consideration hereof, will be sufficient to perswade such persons as esteeme more the benefite of their Countrey, than their own lust or appetite, setting before their eies the feare of God in obedience to the Princes commandement, especialy in such things as concerne the benefite of a Common-wealth, considering S. Paule saith, there is no power but of God: The powers (saith he) that be, are ordained of God: and those that resist these powers, resist the ordinance of God.

It is further to be considered, that there is no conscience to be made in the kinde or nature of the meate being flesh or Fish, as in times past a feigned ceremonie therein was vsed neither is the meate concerning it selfe vnlawfull to be eaten at any time, but the vse thereof is vnlawfull, being forbidden to eate by the Prince, hauing power and authoritie from God, and doone by content of the whole estate for a Common-wealth, wherein obedience ought to be shewed, not for feare of punishment onely (as S. Paule saith) but for conscience sake, not esteeming the meate nor the day, but obedience to the law & benefite to our Countrey & poore brethren: remembryng that the Magistrate beareth not the sword for nought but to take vengeance vpon them that doo euill. For S. Paule saith further: He that will liue without feare of punishment must doo well, and so shall he haue praise for the same.

And although feare of punishment will not reforme such persons, as by affection conceiued hath bene adicted from the expence of fish and the obseruation of Fish-daies: yet the foresaid things considered, let obedience to their Prince and benefite to their Countrey, perswade them to brydle their affectioned lust for a small time, so shall they both see and feelee the great benefites thereby growing and escape the punishment for the offence appointed: and for that the commodities may in some part more plainly appeare, hereafter followeth an estimate of the Beeces that are killed and vterred for the Cittie of London and Suburbs for a yeere, and what number of them might be spared in the said yeere, by one daies abstinence in a weeke, by which also may be coniectured, what may be spared in the whole Realme.

An estimate what Beeces might be spared in a yeere, in the Cittie of London, by one dayes abstinence in a weeke.

First in the yeere are fiftie two weekes, for euery weeke seven dayes, in all 365. The Lent with Friday and Saturday 153. fish-daies, and 211. flesh-daies, that is 58. flesh-daies tuesday in euery weeke, & the other accustomed fish dayes, being collected together, extend to 153. So in the yeere is more than fish dayes.

So the yeere being 52. weekes, abate 7. for the time of Lent, wherein no Beeces ought to be killed, and there remaineth but 45. weekes. Then let vs say there be thre score Butchers, freemen, with in the Cittie, and euery Butcher to kill weekly the one with the other, five Beeces apeece. The same amounteth to 13500. Beeces.

The Forrainers in the Suburbs, & such as come out of the Countrey to serue the Markets in the Cittie, as it is credibly affirmed, kill and vter in the Cittie weekly, foure times so many as the freemen, which amounteth to 54000.

If we will now know what number of Beeces might be spared in a yeere, by one dayes abstinence in a weeke: let vs say in the weeke are five daies accustomedly serued with flesh, (for that Friday and Saturday by the lawe are dayes of abstinence) whereof one being taken away, there resteth but foure: in like case, deuide the saide 67500. into five parts } And the first part spared, by the first daies abstinence, is 13500.

By this is not meant that any more fish-daies should be ordained, than already are, but that Friday and Saturday might be in better sort obserued, for that flesh victuals on those daies, in most places, are as commonly spent as on flesh daies, and therefore may well be accounted for the expence of one flesh-day: the due obseruation whereof, would spare the number of Beeces aforesaid or more, besides those things sold by the Poulsters, and other small Cattell, as Calues, Sheepe, and Lambes innumerable killed by the Butcher.

Seen and allowed by the most honorable priuie Counsell, in the yeere of our Lord God, 1593. The 20. of March.

AT LONDON

Printed by Roger Warde dwelling in Fleetstreete ouer against the Conduit at the signe of the Castle.